

# TELEGRAM

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12065:	FROM: Amembassy BUENOS AIRES	CLASSIFICATION: [REDACTED]
E.O. 11652:	3/22/88 GDS/ [REDACTED] (RUSER, CW) OR-M	
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SUBJECT:	Politics Not as Usual	ARGENTINA PROJECT (S200000044) U.S. DEPT. OF STATE, A/RPS/IPS Margaret P. Grafeld, Director (X) Release ( ) Excise ( ) Deny Exemption(s): Declassify: ( ) In Part (X) In Full ( ) Classify as ( ) Extend as ( ) Downgrade to Date Declassify on Reason
ACTION:	SECSTATE WASHDC	
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POL-4 AMB DCM ECON USIS SCI DAO FAS Chron	[REDACTED] BUENOS AIRES	158
RF	REF: Buenos Aires 1467	
	1. - entire text	
	2. SUMMARY: With the end of the Southern Hemisphere's summer Argentina is showing more political ferment than at any time since 1976. President Galtieri and his closest collaborators contribute to this by raising expectations for greater liberalization. The main parties and labor are slogging ahead with their assault especially on the government's economic policy. The Catholic Church hierarchy meanwhile, faced with growing pressure to speak out on the social and economic situation, faces some delicate choices. We believe that the government, partly for tactical reasons--attempting to break out of its political isolation and soften social-political tensions in the country--is seeking to project a conciliatory attitude,	

DRAFTED BY: POL/JEF/ing/DCM:CWRuser:daj/bw	DRAFTING DATE 3/22/82	TEL. EXT. 220	CONTENTS AND CLASSIFICATION APPROVED BY: AMB:HWSHlauderma
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further lessen controls (but in a limited fashion), show concern for human rights and hold out ~~various~~ promises of progressively greater political liberalization. President Galtieri's own political ambitions--to continue in office beyond 1984--also are in play. We see no evidence that there exists a genuine interest in a true sharing of political power in the regime/ <sup>at this point;</sup> even the present and prospective political steps, which are ~~part~~ part of the approved political plan, appear to be ~~quite~~ controversial in parts of the military. Present developments are important in restoring greater freedom to Argentines but <sup>affect</sup> they do not/~~affect~~ the country's basic power structure.

END SUMMARY.

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Rosada with Secretary of the Presidency Hector Iglesias ~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~ were joined by Galtieri and the talk went on until 5 PM. Salient in that discussion, according to Matera, was Galtieri's idea for convoking all sectors to sit down in permanent conclave "until white smoke comes from the chimney" signifying, as it does in the election of a new Pope, definitive agreement. St. Jean added ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ that the government would enter such negotiations disposed to make "reciprocal concessions."

4.  
/3. St. Jean also took on the question of the disappeared and state-of-siege prisoners, ~~which he XXXXX has not avoided in the past~~ to offer other encouraging news. Galtieri, he said, now has in his possession "what might be called a White Book" cataloguing "complete and detailed information" insofar as his ministry has been able to establish it, on cases of political disappearance. Adding the usual caveat that while it is "totally impossible" to clarify some individual's fate with precision, he said the three service commanders ~~who~~ will have the final word on its publication. With the approximately 305 ~~held without charges~~ respect to ~~XXXXXXXX~~ PEN prisoners/ St. Jean announced that a number of these would be named for release

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in the next day or so.

5.  
~~/X~~ Addressing a potential electorate carrying much more weight than families, friends and sympathizers of victims of the dirty war, President Galtieri March 18 met with state pensioners to hear their grievances about the government pay freeze. The meeting, first public audience of its type Galtieri has granted, was promoted by a federation of a dozen organizations of retired persons and their survivors, said to represent some 10 percent of the nation's total population. Social Action Minister Carlos Lacoste has been dealing with groups representing which "the passive sector" ~~which~~ are demanding a minimum government stipend for its members of pesos 2 million monthly (about \$175). The expectation was that Galtieri would approve upward adjustments in both floors and ceilings, thus ~~relieving~~ <sup>easing</sup> the financial jam retirees have been in without ~~with~~ inflation-indexed boosts in welfare checks since last October. The newly formed federation, "National Consultative Council of Retirees and Survivors," besides pressuring Lacoste and the Palace for relief, has spokesmen who are now sending up political war-whoops of support for organized labor's various "mobilization" efforts.

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/X. Apart from the government's politicking at the national level, there was, perhaps, significant political movement in the provinces. Most widely publicized were the March 17 decisions of the governor of San Juan province, in the west, in effect to repeal the nominal ban on political activity, and his counterpart in Entre Rios province in the north-east to allow the big-five parties in the multipartidaria to rally its forces in the region. San Juan governor Leopoldo Bravo is a local political force in the "Partido Bloquista" and former ambassador to the Soviet Union and, briefly, in Rome for the Viola government. He has been making the most of his mandate since returning to his native turf in January. He was instrumental in securing a commitment of a \$60 million loan fund to help Vintners in that region to get in the grape harvest. He has also been in the forefront of speculation about the supposed formation of an official party, an activity he denies. Now, he has decreed an end to the ban on all political activity as long as practitioners "abide by government rules concerning safety and order." He said the action "is necessary to adjust current legislation"--the ban dating from 1976 is a national government decree-- "to

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current realities." As an earnest of his intent, he offered the municipal stadium in San Juan to the multipartidaria for a rally it hopes to stage next month. Bravo's Entre Rios colleague, Avelino Washington Ferreira out of "Linea Popular," made the same offer to the multiparty group hoping to organize its mobilization in Parana later this week. Obviously these decisions were approved by Buenos Aires. The suspicion is that the nation's two main parties, the Peronists and Radicals, may not be able to show much strength in those districts.

7.  
/8. The question of who is to be mayor of the city of Buenos Aires, the nation's capital, was also under consideration this week in the Junta, as the deadline on the incumbent's term expires next week. From outward signs it appeared to be a tussle between the Galtieri team in the Army, which is believed to want a civilian, and the Air Force, which wants another term for one of its own, retired Brigadier Osvaldo Cacciatore. As this discussion proceeded, a court in Corrientes province at midweek dismissed several charges against a leading Peronist financial angel, Julio Romero. Romero, now in exile in Paraguay, is always an object of political attention for his ties with the party

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and, reputedly, with Galtieri, growing out of their association prior to 1976 when the Peronist was Corrientes governor and the general regional army commander there. While the March 15 legal ruling was in his favor, Romero still faces other charges of misconduct while in office. On their face, these indictments appear to be based more on abuse of privilege than political crimes. If Romero is allowed to return, it could be to play the same kind of supporting role ~~for the military regime~~ Galtieri may hope to get from ~~the Peronist neurosurgeon Matera.~~

8.  
/X. In the past fortnight's acceleration of political activities, the opposition parties, as suggested above, were engaged in expanding the presence of the multi-partidaria outside the capitol into the provinces. For the most part, the effort concentrated on organizing themselves in important population centers and in issuing the now customary denunciations of government economic/social policy. ~~There has been no~~ ~~public reactions from the parties to~~ ~~the Galtieri-St. Jean~~ ~~statements.~~ But the idea may strike a response among many politicians who argue in private that a multi-sectoral dialogue with the military is the only road to an enduring political solution for the near

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term. The labor federations for their part seem to be concentrating on happenings, such as anti-government demonstrations next week on the sixth anniversary of, the birth of the military's "process." / ~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~ The CNT, however, draws a distinction between its opposition to the / ~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~ / ~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~ / ~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~ Alemann program and its attitude toward the government and / ~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~ the "process".

9.  
/ ~~XX~~ The Church hierarchy finds itself willy-nilly in the political fray. The Permanent Commission of the Episcopate, a sort of steering group for Argentina's 12 archdiocese, has been meeting to prepare for next month's plenary of bishops which will restructure the Episcopate itself. Cardinal Raul Primatesta's second three-year term as president of the Episcopate's executive commission is ending and it is expected he will step down. Departure of the moderate Primatesta encourage may / ~~XXXX~~ some of his more progressively-minded colleagues to look for ways / ~~XX~~ to harden the organization's heretofore balanced criticism of the military government. But the Church has its own way of settling these matters quietly. Its real problem at this point would appear to be how to be responsive to what it sees as growing social unrest without being / ~~XX~~ drawn into becoming a platform for / ~~XX~~ politicians and labor leaders. The latter, for

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example, are importuning the bishops to celebrate symbolic masses in the nation's most revered religious shrine, the Basilica of Lujan, to pray for bread and jobs. The former, the multipartidaria, is doing all it can to harness the undoubted power of the Church to its political ends. In both cases, the Episcopate will becoming identified with -  
~~xxxxx/try to avoid/xxxxx~~ these two suitors, and check the felt alienation from the military to keep open their communications, while at the same time maintaining its credibility and prestige.

10.  
~~/xxx~~ With the start of the nation's schoolyear this week, officially signaling the end of the southern hemisphere's summer vacation, the country is ~~xxxxxx~~ showing more ferment than has been seen political/~~xxxxxx~~ here in half a decade. The ~~xxxxxx~~ pace and direction of events in the coming months ~~xxxxxx~~ demonstrate ~~xxxxxx~~ the extent to which Argentine ~~xxxxxx~~ ~~wants change.~~

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11.

~~XXX~~ / COMMENT: The general question arises of how much in all this is image and how much is substance. While there is a further relaxation of the remaining controls, we see no evidence of a genuine willingness to share <sup>at the national level</sup> power with the civilian sectors of society. The liberalization such as it is or likely to be will stop well short of <sup>this</sup> ~~sharing~~. One knowledgeable military source stressed that St. Jean's alleged statements of progress on the disappeared would <sup>be considerably less than</sup> ~~be considerably less than~~ a general accounting. He also suggested that the government's campaign reflects the expansive style of ambitious personalities at the top--the Galtieri himself in particular but also St. Jean and his key aide, Col. Menendez--  
~~and~~ that partly it is designed to reduce tensions in Argentine society and--by feeding the hope of sharing power--forestall further polarization and radicalization of the civilian political sectors. The government also has an important tactical problem--how to avoid alienating those sectors of society friendly to <sup>it</sup> ~~the government~~--such as the labor leaders of the CNT and Group of 20 and, of course, the centrist conservative politicians. Finally, there are Galtieri's own personal ambitions to continue in office beyond 1984. While not envisaging any basic change in the power structure, it appears the President and his collaborators are vaguely thinking of

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ways--through a process of "consultations"--to obtain  
some civilian support and endorsement for a second  
presidential term. All of this, of course, <sup>may</sup> ~~make~~ change, de-  
pending on how the fortunes of the Galtieri Administration  
develop.

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